



NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

NEWS RELEASE

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State Health Department Cautions Residents About the Dangers of Mold

BISMARCK, N.D. – In conjunction with *Home Indoor Air Quality Month*, the North Dakota Department of Health is cautioning residents about the dangers of mold in homes and other buildings. Concerns about mold growth should be addressed quickly in order to prevent illness, according to State Health Officer Terry Dwelle, M.D.

Governor John Hoeven has proclaimed October 2005 as *Home Indoor Air Quality Month* to encourage North Dakotans to learn more about indoor air quality issues.

Many homes in the state are at an increased risk for mold growth following this year's unusually frequent and heavy rains. Other factors that can increase the risk of a home developing mold include:

- Modern construction techniques designed to make homes more energy efficient.
- The composition of some building materials.
- Poor construction.

People vary in their susceptibility to mold, but almost anyone who breathes enough mold spores can develop an adverse reaction. When airborne mold spores are present in large numbers, they can trigger allergic reactions, asthma episodes, infections and other respiratory problems. In addition, exposure can cause the development of an allergy to mold, resulting in long-term health problems.

“People who have asthma or lung problems and those who are allergic to mold are especially vulnerable to mold-related illness,” Dwelle said. “It is very important to clean and disinfect the areas infested with mold and to remove the source of the moisture so mold doesn’t grow again.”

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Wet building materials provide an ideal environment for mold growth. Mold can infiltrate sheet rock, carpeting and insulation. These materials generally should be discarded if they become saturated. Structural building elements, such as wood, usually can be salvaged with appropriate cleaning and disinfecting of the mold-impacted areas.

Once non-salvageable materials are removed, the source of the moisture must be removed or mold growth will recur. This may involve caulking or sealing doors or windows, repairing leaking roofs, installing sump pumps in basements, redirecting surface water away from the outside of a building or ensuring adequate ventilation to prevent condensation.

If you can see or smell mold, a mold problem likely exists. Mold typically has a musty or earthy odor. Follow these Department of Health recommendations to clean, disinfect and dry the moldy area:

- Use non-ammonia soap or detergent and hot water, or a commercial cleaner.
- Thoroughly scrub all contaminated surfaces with liberal amounts of the soap or detergent. (Use a stiff brush to clean cement or brick walls.)
- Rinse all surfaces with clean water. A wet-dry vacuum may be used to collect extra water.
- After cleaning, apply a disinfectant solution of household bleach to the surface (two cups of bleach per gallon of water). Apply the solution with a garden sprayer or spray bottle, or wipe it on with a sponge or rag. Be sure to wet the studs, wall cavities and floors thoroughly.
- Allow the bleach solution to dry naturally for six to eight hours. Do not remove or dry the bleach solution too quickly because extended contact is important to kill the mold.
- Never mix bleach with ammonia because the fumes are toxic. Wear eye protection and rubber gloves when working with bleach, and ventilate the area well by opening doors and windows. Use respiratory protection when working around moldy areas.

Anyone who has questions about the cleanup of a mold-damaged home can contact their local public health unit or the North Dakota Department of Health at 701.328.5188 or 800.755.1625.

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